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THE SOLDIER IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY

BY

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The Soldier in the Construction of Democracy

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ABSTRACT

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The best brief definition of democracy is still that which Abraham Lincoln gave at Gettysburg Pa in 1863: "government of the people, by the people, for the people". When this principle is applied in the right direction, it is undoubtedly the best to conduct a population destiny. But in some countries like Ecuador, democracy has been used some times for the abuse of power. In that case it is necessary to have an organization like the Armed Forces to guarantee the will of the people and protect the democracy. The Ecuadorian Armed Forces have taken responsibility to support democracy regardless of its failures. This study shows how the Armed Forces as institution understand the democracy and the role that plays to support it.

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THE SOLDIER IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY

The Army is in reasonable good condition, considering the fact that peace and politics are always more damaging than war.

General William T. Sherman, US Army, 1883.

THE ORIGIN OF THE DEMOCRATIC IDEA

Rather than the system of equality, democracy should be understood as one that accepts and tries to correct an unequal reality. Men are equal by reason of different nature, such as geography, genetics, social structure, the way men organized themselves to produce goods that secure their survival, etc. Men, potentially equal, develop differently, according to the geographic medium where they happen to live. The medium is influential with greater intensity, according to how low is the scientific and technical level of a society. The man of the desert, the Arctic, of the subtropical valleys, or of the scorching tropics, create in dialectic relation with the environment in which they live. ¹

On the other hand, within those same regional groups, notable differences result from contacts, exchanges and other relationships. Even in the most simple and intimate nucleus, the infinite genetic variables produce important differences. Since his appearance as a species, man differentiated himself by

his force, astuteness, experience, ached by the ambition for power.

Historically, man develops in an environment of scarcity and insecurity. Hypothetically we could imagine the same being in an environment of full abundance and the actual concepts of economy, politics and society would be lost. That would be, without the need of inventing it, a full democracy. But the growing needs and scarcity marks the real journey of the human species upon earth, facing natural forces, other species, and other men themselves.

This environment of competition for survival and welfare leads to the premise of accumulating for the benefit of individual, family or group security. This process generates the accumulation, which is concentrated because the limited resources can only be obtained by means of de-concentration and de-accumulation that affect other men, families, groups and geographical areas.²

So that the process may take place, and so that it can be consolidated and reproduced, parallel and natural structures of material power and ideology are created, these consolidate and legitimize inequality as the natural condition of men, organizations and geographical areas in their mutual relations.

On the other hand, productive processes of growing complexity provoke the division of work by specialty areas, by

which groups are formed that generate different forms of bonds, loyalties and interests that can enter into cooperation or conflict relations with other segments of society. Finally, men are differentiated by their position before in terms of power. Some are owners and some are not. Some are authorities and some obey and others are potentially generators of conflict.

The scientific technical development constitutes an additional element of inequality. The clergy has power because of knowledge. States practice hegemonies by the same criteria. When the basic sources of energy that move the productive apparatus are human and those obtained by domesticating other species, servitude is society's motor for progress.³

The birth of the Greek "polis", brought about the secularization of the political system, the emission of laws and the birth of a new class of professional soldiers the hoplite. The French political scientist Maurice Duverger says that the "polis" as a city-state and politics was born in Greece. As a political regime, democracy was analyzed there for the first time and the first practical application when the pro slavery class found a form of organization according with the actual social and economic structure. The Roman Republic found a form of division of powers that allowed the hegemony of the Roman "populus" over slaves and gentiles. The Consuls, the Senate and

the Tribunes of the Plebe represented the mixed system thought by Cicero.

The long mediaeval night came afterwards, the popes' and emperors' dominion epoch and the supremacy of the Church, a term after which thinkers like Nicolo Machiavelli and artists like Michelangelo appealed for the need of a Renaissance; to go back to the classic, converting antique Greco-Roman culture to the ideal. But even in this long period, important changes to the power structures provoked the appearance of parliaments and the obtaining people's rights. In the case of England, the Magna Carta was promulgated in 1215 and in 1265 its first parliament was instituted.

Commercial capitalism and the colonial expansion allowed a dynamic accumulation of wealth and power in determined European countries that started to consolidate national states under the firm control of absolute regimes. The accumulation of wealth and the advance of science and techniques led to the industrial revolution and consequently the rise of the bourgeois as a social class ready to dispute the power of the monarchs, nobility and the clergy in the search for instances of participation in the political administration that would permit them to guard their interests. By the end of the XVIII Century charters and parliaments, embryos of the future democratic institutions were extended over much of Europe.

With the advance of capitalism and the power of the bourgeoisie, after a long period of political struggle, which culminated in the North American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789, liberalism was affirmed as a political ideology and economic practice. The parliaments become necessary, the appearance of political parties, first as electoral clubs with restricted representation and later as articulators of demands and administrators of the conflicts inside the state. At this stage, individual rights are proclaimed and the democratic model is defined that combines economic liberalism, party systems, parliaments, separation of powers as its most important elements.

THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

Democracy is at the same time an accomplishment, a process, and an objective. The fruit of the advances of education, science, culture and the progressive expansion of this good to the great masses of the population it is an objective, because as an aspiration it is never fully reached. It is placed in the field of the permanent objectives that are pursued by the social organization and is a process because it's being accomplished according to specific conditions of time and space, through stages that are observed in ample perspective and that, are irreversible.⁴

Democracy, is based on:

- Dominance of law as an expression of the general will.
- Separation of powers.
- Participation and representation in the exercise of power.
- Respect for the fundamental rights of the people.

From another perspective, there are conditions necessary for the operation of the democratic regime:

- The institutionalization of conflict.
- The secured participation of all the social actors.
- The possibility of looking for transformations of the system without using violence.

From the analysis of all these elements we see that the essence of democracy is pluralism in the exercise of power, by means of distributed systems that diminish the effect of their accumulation and concentration. Participation is an essential factor of democracy and pluralism, it is necessary and is only produced as an effect of the new forms of power facilitated by the advance of the economic and political systems. Democracy is the only system with the capacity to perfect itself.

Other fundamental aspects of the democratic system are derived from that play of forces that balances the exercise of political power: the respect of man's rights, of the community and in a superior scale, the rights of the state.

When one speaks of rights in the three dimensions, one has to insist in what the aspects of the living together with others internally and internationally must be. They are integrated and mutually conditioned; that is, the economic, social and political rights can only be reached conjointly because they are a part of the whole.

Other elements of the real democracy, are the capacity to dissent, the possibility of criticizing, opposition by non violent means, decisions by consensus, respect for minorities, to cite only some of them.

The viable facilitators of life in a democracy, that are more instrumental than substantial, and therefore are more visible, are the separation of political power, that diminishes the exercise of the authority power. Another is the existence of parliaments, if they reflect the true division of society in groups of diverse interests and not, if they simply represent the negative interest of a small group. There are also political parties, if they are articulated by the social demands and not by simple intermediaries who exercise the real power. Democracy is fundamentally a form of life in which justice is viable.⁵

THE DEFORMATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

Democracy isn't a finished product, it is not a complete actuality. It is not a gift from those in power to the weak social groups; rather, it is a historical process made possible by humanity's transaction as a species toward each time higher levels. Representative democracy, fits the free market economy, and economic liberalism. But it cannot be the only form of democracy that is applicable to all forms of reality.

In Ecuador, like in Latin America, the state was born with a written constitution, copied from the North American and French models that was evidently contradictory with the political practice and social reality. In spite of the advances obtained in arduous struggle for more than 160 years, this remains the truth. The country lives a democracy, which is a reflection of its own frustrating reality and expectations.⁶

Democracy is deformed when political parties are converted into electoral enterprises, generally of a familiar pattern or a kind of oligarchy of political power closed to the participation and promotion of the best members of the community. When the common citizen sees his right to elect and to be elected converted into the obligation of going to vote without the most remote option of seeking a popular elective post. When

candidacies are auctioned to the highest bidder and the electoral campaigns cost millions of sucres, it leads to the resurgence of the plutocratic control over the political process and to corruption.

The electoral process is vitiated when, the people are obliged to vote for persons that were elected as candidates, because either they had the money to buy the candidacy or because the owner of the of the party put them there because they are relatives or friends.⁷

When the electoral campaigns exacerbate the lowest passions and sentiments, instead of educating the population, they are submitted to the most absurd offers that are never fulfilled. This divides and immobilizes the popular organization and maintains the base organizations paralyzed, social participation waiting for dramatic solutions that never arrive. That way, the authorities reach power laden with commitments; true enterprises are created to recuperate the campaign expenses, contracts and acquisitions of the public sector are charged additional costs that multiply the real value of the public works, the bureaucracy is swollen to place like minded people and the options of acceptable and possible development for the community are destroyed.

Democracy is deformed when the low level of the political culture of the population is exploited; when "advisors" of

campaigns get contracts; enterprises that handle propaganda in the worst possible manner and manipulate opinions utilizing their own techniques of psychological warfare and marketing.

These are the most visible vices of democracy, we hope to reorient it for the welfare of the proper actors of the political process, that as it is known, have become discredited in such a way that they have reached the lowest levels of society's credibility and trust.

An effort has to be made to perfect the quality of the parties, elevate the political culture of the community, create an efficient political leadership; secure an authentic popular participation; purify the electoral processes; defeat corruption and easy money or impede its access to the financing of campaigns, design an adequate democracy to the specific realities of the countries, that strengthens their independence and makes viable their governance, and create a consensus culture. Only that way will democracy be, the government of the people, for the people, and by the people.

THE SOLDIER IN THE DEMOCRACY

With demands always increasing and scarcer resources all the time, man from most primitive stages of evolution, conformed, developed and accumulated survival resources and thereby, concentrated power.

With the development of the juridical institutions, more efficient forms to dissuade, tone down, defer, and to suppress conflicts are reached. The concept of sovereignty, the lack or weakness of a juridical order and a legitimate force, not imperial, makes violent solution continue dominating openly or surreptitiously international relations.

The American political scientist Stanley Hoffoman affirms that "war is (or has been) a fire that almost anything or combination of things can flare up and nourish it. Innumerable factors, biological, psychological, material and political, can provoke a war, innumerable elements of the international system, innumerable elections, or goals of exterior politics y technological means may give form to its up set..."⁸

War or the menace of war, and like wise the armed forces of the state are, therefore, the instrument of last resort that the political power has to obtain its goals, when these are antagonistic with other actors of international life. General Carl Von Clausewitz expressed that "war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means. By deliberately use of the phase " with the addition of other means" Von Clausewitz wanted to make it clear that war in itself does not suspend political intercourse or change it into something entirely different."⁹

There exist different interpretations about politics, but none of them leave out the focus theme of conflict and strength. Those that consider politics as a science of the spirit, accept that sovereignty, as a special attribute of the state and as last instance decisive expression, can only exist if it is united to power.

On the other hand, politicians hold that politics is ruled by objective laws, and in the center of it is the struggle of factions of contrary interests for creating and increasing power.

In North American politics, realism about the external threat has prevailed. Hans Morgenthau, one of its principal exponents, affirms that the history of modern political thought is the history of a struggle of two schools with different concepts of man, society and politics: one rational - moralist, and another that accepts that society is imperfect from the rational point of view, is the result of inherent forces of human nature, that are reflected in a world of contrary interests, in which the moral principles are complied with through always transitory equilibrium. Realism sustains that politics, is ruled by objective laws and that in the center is the struggle for creating and increasing their power by factions of contrary interests.

The armed forces are an instrument of politics, preferably of last resort for achieving the ends of the society. Their principal function is to apply power so that threats against the nation are prevented, dissuaded, or defeated.

ARMED FORCES AND THE STATE

The reason for having military institutions comes from the functions and nature of the state and the concrete reality of the social organization that gives rise to it.

According to Pio Jaramillo Alvarado, it is the state's function among other things, to keep the security and independence of the nation before foreign nations and to secure internal order and rights.

For Rodrigo Borja, ex President of Ecuador, entities that "within the limits of their competency realize official activity in the State's name shall be called state organs." So, in compliance with the aforementioned actions, the public force comprises the armed forces and the national police.¹⁰

THE SOLDIER AND POLITICAL REGIMES

States are organized under different political regimes and government forms. The governing function is exercised by a special organ, of which the public security force constitutes a specialized element that, allows it to exercise the monopoly of

violence in the service of the state. The latter, in the name of all citizens has the capacity to oblige it and submit them to a legitimate majority-accepted norm of conduct.

The totalitarian regimes of only one party, in the style of Mussolini, Hitler, Franco or Stalin, pretended to suppress social conflict by the use of force to impose a partial political program to the national community. The armed forces are subordinate to the "government's political party of which it is its armed arm". Political commissars ideologically instruct and lead the military personnel and the professional development goes hand in hand with ascension in the political hierarchy. The military commands participate directly in the high levels of political decisions, securing that military interests and points of view are taken into account. ¹¹

Authoritarian regimes are generally transitory and rise as articulators of demands or as administrators or suppressors of conflicts, especially when the democratic organs are insufficient or not capable of complying with those two functions that imply governance: direction and coordination. In certain circumstances they are the last alternative to prevent the disintegration of society in case of the presence of antagonistic contradictions and profound crisis, a civil war or insurgency.

They have also been a resource to preclude subversive movements from obtaining power so as to implement totalitarian models, or transitory systems established by the revolutionary groups while values, normalcy and institutions are replaced and the "new order" is consolidated. In this form of regime, the participation of the armed forces in real power is direct, but always at the service of a political project.

Finally, in representative democracy the armed forces participate in the game of power as an important element, while at the same time, as a group maintains a certain independence, interacts with the others, in achieving the coordination and social cohesiveness.

In this system, the chief of state is the supreme authority of the armed forces. However, there is, direct subordination with other authorities, such as the congress, but not the government political party. Experience demonstrates that, the less political interference exists, the better armed institutions develop and serve society.

SOLDIERS AND PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure groups objectives are to serve as a channel of expression of demands to the political system, of sectors of society identified by concrete interests. These sectors, partial owners of power, may and may not have a general vision of

society. Interest groups present specialized demands common to partial clients, motivated by specific interests, to satisfy those that pressure over the apparatus of the state, over other interest groups and over the public opinion.

In spite of the specialized nature of their missions, the military institution, in a manner similar to the pressure groups, can acquire a high grade of autonomy, converting it self from a means to an end or transform itself to a center of power. This gives rise to militarism. It could also fill the empty spaces of power generated by conflicts and the weakening of the parties, and that way convert itself to a global alternative.¹²

Pressure groups relate themselves with the armed forces from the perspective of their particular interests, trying to influence them to support or serve their ends. It is common that when they see that their power is in danger or at the possibility of employing it, these sectors provoke military participation in politics as a mechanism to preserve the favored "status quo" But it is also possible that dissatisfied groups do not find the adequate political channels for their demands, that they appeal to the military solution to modify the "status quo" in the direction of their convenience.

The pressure groups are informal and formal, and among the second are the institutionalized. "The groups of institutionalized interests are organizations formally

established as part of the political system... the army can intervene as a pressure group...In most of the developing countries the army is a conduit for the middle and lower classes to participate in politics...Where the entrance to politics is restricted, the middle class may see itself obliged to participate by means of the militia."

PARTIAL CONCLUSIONS

- There exist diverse interpretations of the political process depending on the objective and subjective circumstances that surround the analysis.
- Democracy is the system that accepts inequality as a reality of social life and tries to attenuate its consequences.
- There are many reasons for inequality among men, and in a parallel many reasons for conflict. Democracy accepts and institutionalizes and tries to mediate the conflict.
- Democracy is an objective, a process, a form of state, political regime, of government, but it is especially a social organization. It has been conforming to the historical development of humanity up to higher goals of liberty, rationalism, and knowledge.
- The essence of democracy takes root in the division of real power that allows the game of consensual powers that are related to provide general advancement.

- There are deviations that take away virtue and caricature democracy so it is without legitimate value before the population.
- The armed forces are an element of politics and comply with their instrumental function before the political power for the achievement of society's objectives.
- The state realizes the goal of the common good through determined organs in charge of specific functions. Security is the function of the armed forces.
- Diverse political regimes integrate the armed forces in different ways to the exercise of their functions. Only democracy secures the independent employment of coercion under the control of the nation.
- The armed forces relate themselves in various ways with pressure groups, they are other articulators of social demands and could in certain circumstances act like one more pressure group.

THE CIVIL AND MILITARY DIALOGUE FOR DEMOCRACY IN ECUADOR

The pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador and the American University, with officers of the Ecuadorian Army

conducted a series of meetings seeking to increase the channels of communication between the academic and military sectors. The results have been published recently and have served as a basis for the following summary about the theme that preoccupies Ecuadorians.

THE POLITICAL FIELD

The Image of the Military In Society

Studies realized in South America demonstrate that military institutions enjoy a high credibility. Recent surveys in Ecuador place it at the head of institutions with 65%, including over the Church. Intellectuals believe that a certain militaristic ideology exists in societies, that it limits the discussion or criticism of the military themes; that it considers, that the image of the military has been strengthened in the democratic period; that the military has abandoned its repressive function and achieved a negotiating position in the last internal conflicts. Ninety six percent of the citizens of Ecuador support the establishment and maintenance of the armed forces.¹³

The Image Of the Civil Institutions Among The Military

The Ecuadorian military believe that the civilian institutions lack discipline, that corruption has infiltrated in many instances of the national life. The military wishes that

the level of the political class could be raised, that it adhere strongly to democracy but believes it necessary that it be efficient and satisfy social expectations. It accepts the subordination to political organs but claim respect for its institution and that it be granted the space which it has in transcendental national decisions. It is considered a force committed to assisting the marginal social groups and to preserving the ecology.¹⁴

Obedience to the Political Power

The military in Ecuador has achieved a great level of protagonism and a high degree of autonomy that could convert it to an arbiter of democracy. What should be the relationship of the armed forces with the political power?

It is proposed that a greater participation of the armed forces is necessary in national developments policies, to tap and preserve resources, environmental goals and other themes than help reduce the poverty, extreme poverty etc.. but, all within the legal framework and obedience of the political power. It is also proposed that political leaders be knowledgeable about strategic affairs so they can take control of security matters. Finally the meetings propose that military themes be open to the knowledge and discussion of the whole society. In

this way it could fill together the gaps with the purpose of creating integral policies of development and security.

The Soldier And Human Rights

In this field the armed forces have been considered respectful of the citizens' rights. Training has been given for some years to the military on themes of this nature and society trusts the military forces. For their part, the military feels pride in its respect for citizens. The armed forces created in 1978 a human rights program with the purpose of opening an educational process of dialogue and interchange of acknowledgement for the military professional. This reinforced the level of understanding of democracy, human rights, defense, protection of the environment, and human security.

Governance

Governance is an actual theme in Ecuador. The nature of the structure of the state makes the country non-governable, that it is impossible to define a national project supported by long term politics.

On this theme civilians and military agree that the Ecuadorian people are governable and that the non-governable originates in the behavior of the political class, the efficient

organization of the state, and its judicial system, which everyone thinks should be reformed.

IN THE ECONOMIC ARENA

Military Expenses

Some sectors of society believe that military expenses compete with those that could be dedicated to social development. They state that there is no explicit policy of defense, for which the allocation of resources lack a real foundation, that the evaluation and control mechanisms are limited and the international system is threatening all of which does not help to lower military expenses. It is believed also, that military budgets should be discussed without reservations and that military procurement should be transparent. In the case of Ecuador, military buying is done through the National Defense Board in which the powers of the state and civil society are represented.

The military states that defense expenses are an investment, that this expense cannot be blamed for the lack of attention to the social needs of the population. It also sustains that the levels of expenses are minimal in relation to the menace confronting the country and it would be dangerous to weaken the defense and collective security systems. Finally, some would desire to be self sufficient so as not to constitute a burden to

the state. They believe that the military expense should be analyzed in the most ample concept.¹⁵

Participation of the Military In The Economy

This is a sensitive subject for the Armed Forces. Some business sectors complain about the existence of military enterprises, considering that they are disloyal competitors and remove the military from their specific missions. Other entrepreneurs, on the other hand, look for security in their investments by participating jointly with the military enterprises, which provokes ample concern among those who believe that there is an alliance of the dominant sectors with the military, thus augmenting their power.

Formerly, the armed forces were criticized because they were regarded as non-productive, in the words of leftist politicians. Many years ago they were called "the octopuses of the state" because they consumed without producing.

For their part, the military states that the military expenses are a small part of the total expense and that the lack of resources for attention to the sector cannot be imputed to them. They believe that they can contribute to the defense expenses with their own enterprises that do not present exigencies that affect the overall development of the country.

They continue considering basic the equation that national security equals development.

The Global Economy

The modernization of the economy has raised an intense discussion in Ecuador. Important groups believe that privatization constitutes a form of de-capitalization of the state, a sale of the national patrimony and a danger in the medium term, especially in economic areas considered strategically important for national security. Other sectors believe in the need attract investors and to end the state participation in entrepreneurial activities that have been generally inefficient and in many cases ruinous. Both parties would wait for the commitment of the armed forces with their entire moral strength and prestige to back their thesis. Facing the privatization currents they state the need that the processes be transparent and for the best possible benefit for the country.

PARTIAL CONCLUSIONS

- The civilian-military relationship is insufficient for understanding the social dynamics and the way in which the military relates with the rest of society.

- The dialogue between academicians and the military in Ecuador has served as an opportunity for clarifying the social phenomenon that involve the military but that evidently have ample effects in the life of Ecuadorians.
- The dialogue between the different sectors of society is much more fluid in a democratic system that gives privilege to consensus over confrontation.
- For the military also democracy has constituted the best system for strengthening its institutional image and for a better integration into society.
- The societies in which contradictions become antagonistic generate internal confrontations in which the military forces are employed by the legal powers. That employment may produce estrangement from which the military cannot get away from a coercive role of the Armed Forces. It is not institutionally convenient.

FINAL CONCLUSION

In February 6, 1997 after six months as President of the Ecuadorians Bucaram finished his regime accused of mental incapacity. His government was characterized by an environment of nepotism, wrong employment of the fiscal budget, authoritarian regime, corruption, in other words the democracy

in Ecuador teetered, because of the abuse of power. In this context, the "legal tool for democracy enforcement" was present. Soldiers will keep order with adequate intervention in the process to reestablish it. In Ecuador the soldier is the guarantor and helps to build and maintain the system of democracy. The soldier at this time understands clearly his role in the context of the democratic system, and the population that trusts his patriotic values supports his actions. The main goal is to save the political and economic existence of the state.

ENDNOTES

¹Paco Moncayo, Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad, Quito, Cooperacion Editora Nacional, 1991 p 12.

²Paco Moncayo, conferencia en la Politecnica del Ejercito, Abril 1997, "Concepcion moderna de las relaciones civiles militares".

³Paco Moncayo , "Fuerzas Armadas en la consrtuccion de la democracia", Revista de las Fuerzas Armadas, Ed. Mayo 1997, articulo, .

⁴PUCE Democracy Projects of American University, Dialogo Civil- Militar p 48.

⁵Galo Moscoso Colonel E.M., "Fuerzas Armadas en los procesos de consolidacion y estabilidad democratica", Revista de las Fuerzas Armadas, Ed. Mayo 1997.

⁶PUCE Democracy Projects of American University, Dialogo Civil- Militar p 50.

⁷Paco Moncayo , "Fuerzas Armadas en la construccion de la democracia" articulo, p 67.

⁸Galo Moscoso Colonel E.M., "Fuerzas Armadas en los procesos de consolidacion y estabilidad democratica" Revista de las Fuerzas Armadas, Ed. Mayo 1997, p 77

⁹ Clausewitz, Carl Von, On War, Princeton University Press, 1976, book eight, chaper six. War Is an Instrument of Policy, p 605 .

¹⁰ Rodrigo Borja Ex presidente de la Republica, conferencia en la Politecnica del Ejercito, Abril 1997, "Concepcion moderna de las relaciones civiles militares".

¹¹ PUCE Democracy Projects of American University, Dialogo Civil- Militar p 56.

¹² Paco Moncayo , " Fuerzas Armadas en la consrtuccion de la democracia", p 69.

¹³ Bertha Garcia Gallegos PUCE Democracy Projects of American University, Dialogo Civil- Militar p 100.

¹⁴ Revista Vistazo, " Fuerzas Armadas y Paz", Quito March 1997.

¹⁵ General Cesar Duran, Conferencia, Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales, "El globalizacion de la Economia", Quito Mayo 1997.

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